

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ANKARA 03315 270722Z

43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

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R 261429Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3339

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

USMISSION USNATO

USDOCSOUTH NAPLES

CINCUSAFE

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 3315

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MPOL, TU

SUBJ: APPOINTMENT OF NEW TURKISH AIR FORCE COMMANDER

REF: ANKARA 2790 (DTG 091439Z APR)

1. THE TURKISH PRESS REPORTED APRIL 23 THAT THE TURKISH GENERAL STAFF (TGS) RESPONDING TO THE DESIRE OF THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT HAD WITHDRAWN ITS NOMINATION OF GENERAL IRFAN QZAYDINLI TO BECOME AIR FORCE CHIEF AND HAD SUBMITTED THE NOMINATION OF LT. GEN. CEMAL ENGIN, THE PRESENT ACTING COMMANDER (WHO IS OUTRANKED BY BOTH OZAYDINLI AND GEN AYAN). TGS APRIL 24 ISSUED A BRIEF STATEMENT SAYING THAT ENGIN WOULD, AS OF THAT DAY, ASSUME THE POSITION OF TAF COMMANDER.

2. THE REACTION OF THE OPPOSITION REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S  
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PAGE 02 ANKARA 03315 270722Z

PARTY (RPP) WAS PREDICTABLE OUTRAGE. RPP SEC GEN EYUBOGLU

ACCUSED THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT OF POLITICIZING THE MILITARY BY CHOSSING " FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC" NOT TO ACCEPT A TGS NOMINATION FOR COMMANDING OFFICER OF ONE OF THE ARMED SERVICES. EYUBOGLU CONCEDED THAT THE ASSIGNMENT OF MILITARY COMMANDERS WAS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE PRIMIN BUT HE SAID THAT THE PRIMIN DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE HIS AUTHORITY IN SUCH A MANNER WHICH UNDERCUT THE TGS CHIEF AND THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE. HE SAID THAT THE PRIMIN MUST ACCOUNT FOR THIS IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR AND HE INVITED HIM TO DO SO.

3. BECAUSE OF THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND, NO OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE YET REACTED TO THE ASSIGNMENT OF GEN ENGIN. HOWEVER, RETIRED AIR FORCE GENERAL MUCIP ATAKLI, WHO IS A LIFE SENATOR (MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL UNITY COMMITTEE WHICH CARRIED OUT THE 1960 COUP) ISSUED A " PERSONAL" STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT PRESIDENT KORUTURK WOULD NOT APPROVE OF ENGIN'S ASSIGNMENT. ATAKLI SAID THAT SUCH AN INCIDENT HAD NOT OCCURRED IN THE HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC, HAT IT VIOLATED TH TRADITIONS AND POLICIES OF THE ATATURK AND INONU PERIODS, THAT IT INVOLVED THE MILITARY IN POLITICS, AND CREATED UNREST WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES.

4. IN RESPONSE, JUSTICE PARTY (JP) SECGEN NAHIT MENTESE ISSUED A STATEMENT APRIL 25 IN WHICH HE POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS NOT THE WORK OF THE RPP TO DECIDE WHO WOULD BE COMMANDERS OF THE ARMED FORCES. HE SAID THE ASSIGNMENT OF ENGIN WAS MADE WITHIN THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND FOR THE RPP TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENT OF A NEW AIR FORCE COMMANDER WAS A PROVOCATION.

5. COMMENT: ENGIN'S ASSIGNMENT APPEARS NOT TO VIOLATE THE LAW BUT IT CLEARLY VIOLATES THE TRADITIONS OF THE TURKISH MILITARY FORCES WHICH PROVIDE THAT THE SENIOR OFFICER ON ACTIVE DUTY ACCEDE TOMSOMMAND. MOREOVER, THERE ARE OBVIOUS POLITICAL ASPECTS OT THIS ASSIGNMENT. QZAYDINLI IS REPORTEDLY CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE RPP AS A FRIEND AND PRO-TEGE OF RPP SENATOR AND FORMER AIRFORCE COMMANDER MUHSIN BATUR. DURING HIS SERVICE AS MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER IN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ANKARA 03315 270722Z

ESKISEHIR PROVINCE HE ALLEGEDLY ANTAGONIZED RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES BY HIS AGGRESSIVE SECULARISM. FOR THESE TWO REASONS, HE WAS UNPALATABLE TO THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES IN THE COALITION. THE DEGREE TO WHICH ENGIN'S ASSIGNMENT AND ITS POLITICAL ASPECTS WILL CREATE CONCERN WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES IS NOT CLEAR. THE AIR FORCE IS ALREDY IN SOME DISARRAY WITH THE RESIGNATION UNDER QUESTIONABLE CONDITIONS OF ITS COMMANDER, GENERAL ALPKAYA. EVEN THOUGH IT NOW

HICEMS THAT HE WILL BE ACQUITTED OF ANY WORNGDOING, THE SPECTACLE OF A PUBLIC TRIAL HAS BEEN UPSETTING. IT HAS ALSO SURFACED RUMORS OF PETTY PERSONAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN ALPKAYA AND TGS CHIEF SANCAR. BECAUSE THE TURKISH MILITARY IS A VERY CLOSED SOCIETY IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ASSESS THE DEGREE OF THE DISCONTENT GENERATED BY THIS SERIES OF INCIDENTS. IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT ALLEGATIONS OF " POLITICAL MANIPULATION" WILL HAVE SOME UNSETTLING EFFECT. WHAT WE CANNOT SAY IS WHETHER THIS UNSETTLING EFFECT WILL SUFFICIENTLY HEIGHTEN THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES OF MIDDLE AND SENIOR GRAD OFFICERS AND LESSEN THE GENERALLY "ANTI-INTERVENTIONIST" SENTIMENTS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE MILITARY.  
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